

VZCZCXRO6176  
RR RUEHPW  
DE RUEHBUL #2236 2350232  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 220232Z AUG 08  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5199  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 5207  
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS KABUL 002236

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, EB/TPP/ATP, PRM  
DEPT PASS USAID/ASIA BUREAU, AID/ANE, DCHA/FFP, DCHA/OFDA  
NSC FOR JWOOD  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: November 2008 Conference on Afghan Refugees

Ref: A - Kabul 1493

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IROA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will co-host the International Conference on Return and Reintegration in Kabul on November 19, 2008. The conference will address the difficult issues related to the Afghan refugee population still residing in Pakistan and Iran. UNHCR Kabul hopes to use the conference to urge Pakistan (especially) and Iran to change their policies of potentially unsustainable and politically sensitive levels of repatriation/deportation while offering more reasonable alternative targets and implementing arrangements.

¶2. (SBU) Co-chaired by IROA Foreign Minister Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta and UNHCR Antonio Guterres, the conference will not be a donor's conference but rather a mechanism to seek a policy convergence among IROA, neighboring countries (Pakistan and Iran), and donor countries on how return and reintegration can be enhanced given Afghanistan's limited absorption capacity (Ref A). UNHCR will present a five-year strategy and plan of implementation for return and reintegration, based on the costing exercise currently being undertaken for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) for 2009-2013. The plan would include a realistic level of return (maximum 1 million persons over five years), which UNHCR hopes will spur donors into increasing resources for existing programs in key provinces and sectors. UNHCR hopes countries will send Ministerial-level envoys to the conference with enough clout to bring the key players together over a realistic and productive outcome.

¶3. (SBU) UNHCR and the IROA Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR) are already sharing ideas informally with Pakistan and Iran on the conference agenda. Through the costing exercise, which will provide costs for reintegration by sectors (e.g., education and health) and geographic areas, UNHCR hopes to stave off Iran's attempts to quantify how much it costs to repatriate or integrate one individual. They fear Iran would use a per/person cost to coerce donors to fund that number times a deportation target, e.g., \$75 million to reintegrate 100,000 deportees at \$750 each. Iran would then feel justified in deporting 100,000 Afghans since the donor community was paying to reintegrate them.

¶4. (SBU) Given the difficult security and political situations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Afghanistan's chronically strained relationship with Iran, it seems unlikely that any of the three governments will be able to focus enough energy on the

conference to find agreement on a rational, mutually acceptable repatriation and reintegration plan. One positive outcome could be that Pakistan and Iran could take some political cover from the conference to walk back slightly from their public positions that their Afghan populations should depart (voluntarily) soon -- a position that many officials recognize privately as unrealistic but dare not voice publicly. In return, both countries would want a strong commitment of continued donor support for programs for Afghan refugees and deportees in the three countries through 2013 and likely beyond.

15. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Islamabad.

WOOD